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Au Courant

The sun rose hot over Mysore that day. Baba rose with the first birds and went through his daily routine and preparation for work. His eyes weighed very much, as did his limbs, but there was work to be done, for the monsoon had been good that year. He knew what to do, for he had been going through the same routine for most of his eleven years, so he thought little of his heavy feet and complaining body.

Sun crept through the door as he slowly opened it, and as he set to work he smiled.



Words are only half truths. In the struggle to find the meaning of life man has written words. Wisdom can never be written or spoken, and, being incommunicable, each must discover the essential himself. Thoughts, too, are imperfect, for they, like words, lack totality. Fragmented insights gained by man appear to be in conflict when expression is attempted; the apparent contradiction distorts understanding between one man and another. Unity is attained through inner sanction, and upon acquiring this peace, words and thoughts are no longer important in grasping the true value of life. Each man is alone in his quest for truth.

— Lexi Freeman

the gypsy boy
came one day in spring
and set me free
with watermelon rain

— Pauline Cerf

Light!
the race begins
and
I've been running since.

— Lexi Freeman

freedom has arrived
for the last
wisp of life to
suck on it
under the glorious multitudes
of green and blue
the sun descends off
its lonely platform
and one hears the
desolate hoofbeats in
contrast to the murderous
snorts and sniffs
of the pigs
pigs
crawling about like
a colony of ants
minus identification
begging for yours
you lose what you
never would have
given anyway
the conspirators
rise from their bed
of leaves
giving one last farewell
kiss to their lovers
with branches entwined
and the kingbee
whispers goodnight thankyou
for a lovely evening

as he watches his friend
collapse and he
mumbles I'm in you.
I'm here I'm the
kingbee buzzing round
your hive and the
ageless lover dies to
be reincarnated as a
human bumble bee freak
who can feel pain
and yet still
sting
pouncing you until
you're in the
center of the massive
abstraction of the lone.

— Kimberly Streeter

A Play

A window-less basement room that seems to be of no predominant color. No doors lead off the stage. A once olive green but now insipidly stained sofa that seems to have been thoroughly battered during its existence stands in the middle of the room. A rather pretty little child sits on the extreme left of the sofa. His legs are too short to reach the floor but his ankles reach the edge of the couch. There is one other person, an old drab man, sitting on the floor with his arms clasped around his legs. His face, unlike the child's, is expressionless, and he stares fixedly at a point near the front of the stage, on the floor.

CHILD: What's that big thing on your nose?

(Silence. Bored, the child crawls backwards off the sofa, walks once around the room, and looks under the sofa. There is nothing that seems to interest him, so he climbs back on the sofa and sits on its back, swinging his legs.)

CHILD: What is there to do here?

(Silence.)

Do you know how to play marbles?

OLD MAN: (Dejectedly, as he remains throughout the play.)
There are no marbles.

CHILD: (Disappointed.) No marbles? I used to have some marbles.

(Searches in his pockets, then gives up.)

CHILD: What are you doing here?

(Silence.)

Don't you know how to talk?

(Silence.)

Stupid.

(Child, bored and frustrated, walks around the room again, scrutinizing it. Again sees nothing of interest.)

CHILD: Where's the door?

(Silence.)

Where's the door, or the stairs?

OLD MAN: There are none.

CHILD: (Hopefully.) A window—How about a window? I'm not very big but I'm very very good at climbing through windows. I broke a window once because it was too high, but usually I'm a great climber. I used to—

OLD MAN: There are no windows.

(Silence.)

CHILD: (Scared.) How do I get out?

(Silence.)

I want to get out. Please, mister, I want to get OUT!

OLD MAN: Shut up.

CHILD: (Hurt, and scared.)—oh.

(Silence.)

CHILD: (Angry.) I hate this place!

(Silence.)

I hate you! You're mean, and I hate you!

(Silence.)

CHILD: (Subdued.) I know a better place.

OLD MAN: Shut up.

CHILD: (Angry.) Oh shut up yourself.

(Silence. The Child is shocked at himself.)

CHILD: I do know a better place.

(The Child looks to see if the Old Man has reacted to this. He has not.)

CHILD: I know a nicer man than you, too.

(Still no reaction. The Child forgets his anger, and continues.)

CHILD: (As though in a trance.) It was in one of the lanes behind the palace. There were peacocks there, beautiful peacocks. My mother taught me that word. Peacocks are the ones with rainbow tails. I met a man there who had raisin eyes and sunfilled skin. First he told me a story, and then I told him my favorite one. There were orange trees and marigolds and stars, and as he spoke the world stopped as though entranced. The light of the moon showed me the animals tht had gathered around. There were tigers, then serene, and cubs with sherry eyes, and butter-flies. They all stopped to hear his tale, which was the tale of all tales, for he was the man of all men. He had sherry eyes — or were those the cubs? Yes, he had raisin eyes, not sherry eyes, raisin eyes (All this time the Child has spoken as though hypnotized. As he finishes what he has to say he looks expectantly at the Old Man.)

OLD MAN: Not raisin eyes.

CHILD: (Indignant.) They were!

OLD MAN: Old eyes.

(Silence.)

Wrinkled eyes.

(Silence.)

CHILD: (Terrified.) No! Raisin eyes! They were magic eyes!
They were! (He throws himself across the sofa and cries hysterically. Gradually his sobs subside and he looks up.)

CHILD: (Puzzled.) Why is everybody crying?

OLD MAN: Shut up.

CHILD: (Desperate.) Love me, please! (By now he is hysterical again. He cries and finally calms down once more.)

CHILD: (Sitting on the edge of the couch.) How did I get here?
(Silence.)
Please.

OLD MAN: Time is, and was.

CHILD: Yes, I know! I've always been here. And you—you've always been here and there's no way out and there aren't even any windows.

(Silence.)

Are there?

(He gets up, and walks around the room, as though looking for something. He moves very slowly, and finally sits back on the left side of the sofa. As he speaks his face remains expressionless and he stares at a spot on the floor.)

CHILD: I know a place.

(Silence.)

I know a man, too.

(Silence.)

The place is ugly and bare and cold. No light comes in, for there are no windows. What light is there has been there for years: settling, and fermenting, and pretending that it's still fresh, as though it were streaming through a window.

(Silence.)

I know a man, too. He's old, and wrinkled.

Black out.

— Margaret Cheney

Summer Triad

We woke with morning eyes to feel
The wind caress our bodies.

The smell of salt was present now; the taste upon our
lips.

Our movements were slow as we rose from the sand,
Grinding grain against grain.

The seagull sounds across the bay were summer sounds,
To be forgotten
As autumn came.

But we listened with care to the seagull's song and
memorized the words
And we walked and we walked that summer day,
Six brown legs against the beige of sand
and sand
and sand.

We drank the sun and swallowed its warmth
And remembered its kindness.

And remembered the summer things one does
When one is three and three are one
And excitement was blue sky
And boredom was gray
And nothing mattered but friendship.

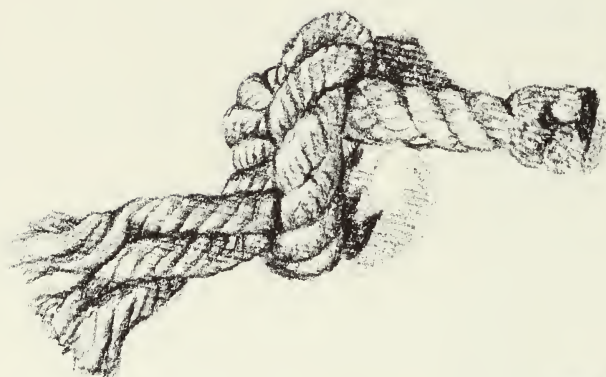
The day grew old and no one said
"It's time to go"
But we felt the September air crawl in.

We turned a half circle and ran through the sand
Away from the beach and the waves and the sun.

For we knew it was autumn
And summer was done.

— Beth Andrews





I'm tired now
exhausted from the knot that twists and turns
 right below the throat and tries to kill
 the sobs and noises that fight to escape
 and make their presence known.

I have to laugh to kill the tears
I've never cried for you before.
I've never shown myself what you were or are or could have been.
for god's sake let them come.

join the flow of mourners
the fragile well-groomed peacocks
who reach into daddy's pockets for consolation
or steal a bottle from the pool-side bar
or hit the streets of the earth, reaching cut for opened doors,
cold mattresses and passing J's.

hoping to remember how they got there
in case the time should come when the canopy bed and crystal
 chandelier
 may offer a solution to the new strangeness and the new fears.
when forgetting could bring more than a loss of home
when forgetting could bring an end to the false realities of yesterday
 and leave no alternatives for tomorrow.

I want to sleep now.
But the knot is tearing at my tonsils, digging deeply to reach the
 bottom
 of the hollow pit.

KEEPING
 ME
 ALIVE

I wonder if you've ever stayed awake all night, afraid of what your
 dreams may create.
I wonder if you've ever missed the warmth of bodies moving sym-
 metrically in patterns of the summer waves.

— Janet Cohen



Maura A.M. 9/30/69



Music flies within my mind;
Undulating,
Crystallizing my eyes.
You are clear, breaking
Through a starlit haze
To hold and shelter me
By being you.
A flute lulls me
Into your arms
To sleep
Upon a wave of song.

—Leslie Breed



The Moth

The small brown speckle darted from my elbow and swooped toward the blurred light. The little creature flew hysterically back and forth in front of the glow before he dashed his tiny powdered self into a tiny pile of powder.

— Lynn Comley



i
have written a love poem.
 (i am in love)
you will read it and tell me
 that it is triteimmatureand (perhaps)
 unrealistic whereupon

i
will tell you (in nothing more
 than a quiet voice)
to go to hell

— D. D. Rudolph

Seasons of my Heart

You came like the warmth of spring
 Casting your brilliance everywhere
Prying through and destroying
 All shadows of my doubts
Beckoning feelings to creep out of
 Their long hibernation from the corners of my soul.
Thawing what had been too long frozen
 Streams of emotion soon everflowing
Entreating flowers to blossom once again
 Looking to eternity for an answer.
Our love was mellowed as weeks flew by
 Gradually allowing our feelings to ripen
By times when we were suffocated
 By the heat of passion
Tempered by storms which shook
 The blossoms of our unselfish sacrifices.
And so, the world spun on— I oblivious to all
 Until you got a cool breath of freedom
And your yearning for fall began
 With that first real chill.

— Sandy Murray

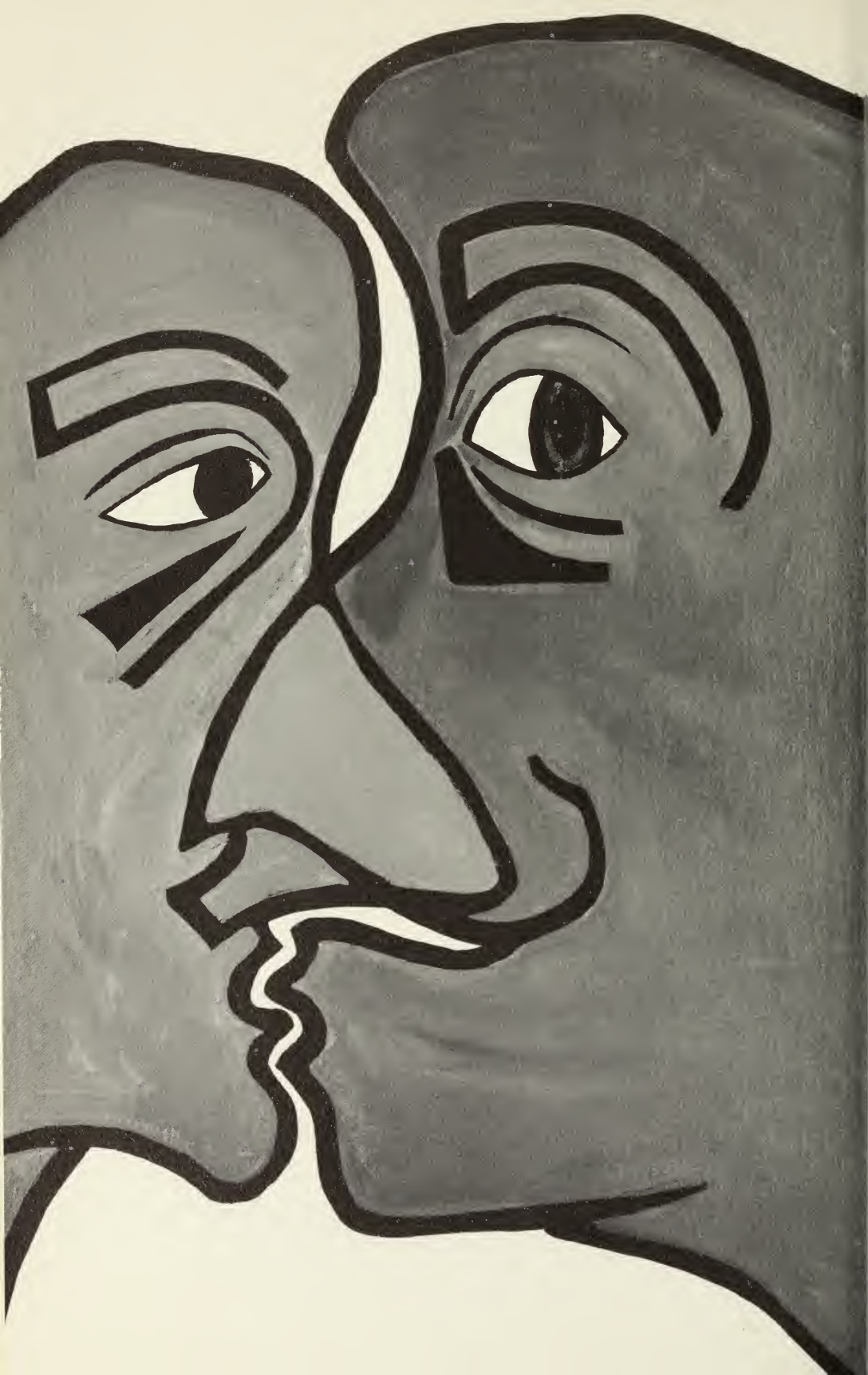
A Death Dilemma

I am sitting at the beach on a straw chair, facing the distant ocean. It is beginning to rain. I think I want to leave the beach and walk far away to my beach house on the dunes, for I am becoming saturated by the droplets of rain. But my legs are weary and my muscles ache. They do not permit me to rise up from my fixed position. SO ARISE, YOU BODY! COME, COME! aaaAAOOoooo. . . I look out into the ocean, searching for an answer to my dilemma between possessing both the desire and the inability to remove myself from the rain. After a while, the moisture secretly seeps through my clothing and chills me cold. ooooo, the wind blows. I shiver in the straw chair as the straws rustle in the wind. And the ocean has become rough- its calm and stability vanish as the foamy waves seethe white. I cannot feel the security of the sea any longer. I know I will not find my answer there, even if there is where it lies. You see, I am afraid of drowning; besides, I am safe here while sitting in the straw chair.

Now I have collected a small puddle of rain in my lap. I look down at this puddle of rain, listen to the pitter in it, notice the peace disturbed by dropletscreatingtinyconcentricrippels. I certainly cannot leave now, for, if I were to do so, the rain puddle would spill into the sand. My lap would disappear! What is so real to me now would cease to exist. no. Of course I would never find the answer with a lost lap and a spilt puddle! Oh, but then I suppose if I were to rise up from the straw chair, despite the fact that these possessions would be gone, I would be able to turn from the turbulent ocean and walk to the beach house. am i able? ? come, Come, COME, COME, AAAAOOOOoooouuu . . ., body, you are too fatigued. How you shiver in your weariness; how you suffer shivering: enough. Up with you, but bring your lap along.

— Adelle Nicholson





with their hands lit unto her head
her eyes so drenched in black
they whisper it's good it's good
you've had enough and
her body is so low cast down
the mind in her head is hungry
its sense dead in knowledge
and she tells you how
one flew east and one
flew west
and one flew over the cuckoo's nest
the best one was the last, she screams
i'm best i am best
sleeping in my cuckoo's nest
and she falls up
good morning
it spins and spins and the room
pulsates by the
portrait called
family blue yellow and green
baby mud
she flashes the battle of the minds
under the degree of 451
fahrenheit
pages ripping turning burning
fading in flame
stranger than that oh christ
we're alive
happyman happyman
the bennington graduate under
robert frost and the fixer's friend

expounds upon the futility of
living
and my ears shovel the sand
limestone and concrete with water
of ancient babylon to end up
with a wall only after
it's over
and it's all closed in and can't
seep out—listen, she says
and you can hear the dust
make love
in the foxholes perpendicular
to the horsetrails of your mind
and the astrology never
works for the gemini
is silent.
the american avatar has it's own
personal
jesus
and there is no god
she screams
and stranger than that
there's a darwin who
had a theory
once
and all the whities blasting
their prejudice for the other
whites
I LOVE THE NIGGER

until she gets to 125th
street and is
pickpocketed of her
virginity
and she runs to her
all american jock lover next
house over and
dies in his madras arms
goodnight thankyou for a lovely
evening
and the duplex is filled with
a sweet odor of blind colors

— Kimberly Streeter





Apollo's Disturbed Slumber

As new life shall come from death
So shall slumbering nature come to life
At the sign of breaking day.

As Apollo soars through infinite heights
Giving eyesight to the blind
Sending ethereal rays of light to the
dew-chilled ground
Sparkling reflections begin to dance
on the tiny crests of a cognizant sea

Ripples surge, swell, roll and break
in awakening magnificence
Sending water rushing in and out of
rocky crevices
Gurgling its own language as
Warm beams pierce the cloudy
morning sky
Heralding another ageless day.

Apollo guiding his flaming chariot onward
has awakened the world
Holding even the clouds at bay.

The birds sing of his glory,
flowers open in reverence
To their god of life— As he skillfully
hurls heat-laden rays
To the very cobwebbed corners of the earth.

Now rapidly moving to the crest of splendor
Showering the earth in his powerful brilliance
Taking masterful pride as he plays with shadows

Like a child redressing its dolls
Using rays like strings of a puppet

He creates forever changing patterns

of stripes, checkered figures

and prised rainbows

Of projected images on slowly warming ground.

Soon tiring of such trivia

He begins to prepare for his exodus

Blanketing the earth in shadows

Lulling the ocean to peace

And rocking the birds gently to sleep

In final anticipation of his departure

He sinks slowly beneath the clouds

Hurling forth the last of his gleaming

fire

Blazing the sky in flaming aurora

Fingerpainting rainbows in the sky

as he bathes the clouds

in kaleidoscopic coloration

Saturated in sapphire, turquoise, indigo,

emerald, scarlet and crimson

Vivid and intense, rich and glowing

fresh and harmonious

Gradually leaving the earth blind once more

Apollo bids farewell.

— Sandy Murray

Time is such an elusive thing; immaterial and then material, it is like the milkweed pod fluffy stars that flutter across the wind until we reach out far enough, quick enough, to catch some. Even then it is ours only for the shortest of whiles.

— **Marcie Rickenbacker**





Passport No. 360299

It is daytime, but one is not sure what time it is. The light is very yellow, and the air is permeated by the smell of sulfur. At center stage is a small wooden desk, with no distinguishing features save a pair of feet that barely show at the bottom of the desk. The owner of the feet is bending over some papers, and is chewing gum noisily. Occasionally he pushes his greasy hair away from his face. Enter a man. The man at the desk, whose nameplate declares that he is Harold, looks at him suspiciously.

HAROLD: (speaking through his gum.) Yeah?

MAN: I came for someone.

HAROLD: Go back to the Bronx, baby. You don't pick up no one here. Once they're here, they stay here.

MAN: No—you don't understand. You see he doesn't belong here. You took him without reason...he was good.

HAROLD: Okay — so maybe you live on Long Island. But the guy stays. (he leans back, eyes narrowed) Hey, what are you doing here if you ain't kicked the bucket yet? You're the first alive person I seen since I came, and I got a sneaky feeling you ain't supposed to be here.

MAN: No, wait — I have a pass. (fumbles in his pocket.) Here.

HAROLD: (looks at it and snorts) Passport No. 360299. Either this is a fake or you're crazy. Why in God's name are you here if you ain't dead?

MAN: I came for someone.

HAROLD: Is he crazy too, or is he dead?

MAN: No, he's not dead. ...And he's not crazy either, but he soon will be if he stays here.

HAROLD: Look, buddy, if he's here it's his own damned fault. Some people say Adam started the whole idea, but I think you get here all by your lonesome self. (He leans back and smiles to himself, satisfied with his logic.)

MAN: Can't I please see him?

HAROLD: Sweetheart, you'd think this was the Plaza Hotel the way people come trampin' through. I don't know why you think you can see this guy. . . It ain't a goddam hospital.

MAN: You let Odysseus see his father — why can't I see a friend of mine?

HAROLD: Okay, okay — what was the name again?

MAN: You didn't ask before. It's John Smith.

HAROLD: (rummaging through an empty desk drawer) Smith. . . Smith. . . Nope — no one here by that name. Come to think of it, ain't nobody here by any name.

MAN: Does that mean I can't get in touch with him? Don't forget that he's different from the rest. He isn't dead yet — I mean, he's still alive.

HAROLD: Let's see. I'll try. (He leans back his head and shouts at the ceiling) Hey Ernie — we got any guys here that are still kicking?

(silence.)

They listen intently.

Nope. He ain't here.

MAN: Do you know where I could find him?

HAROLD: Mister, I'll clue you. You go down that hall to the next door, where everything's blue and it smells like low tide. Or go down the hall to the next door or any one that you like the looks of. Maybe they'll know somethin' about him — but I doubt it. Even if you did find him, you couldn't do a hell of a lot for the poor slob. You're lucky if he even looks at you. But keep on looking.

MAN: Thanks. (He starts to leave stage R., turns around and half-smiles) Just for the record, who runs this operation?

HAROLD: Nobody, buddy. Here, everyone is in charge of themselves and no one else.

The man leaves and Harold bends over his desk again. The scene remains static for five minutes, then the curtain falls.

—Liza Gaines



I watched you in your tower yesterday.
You smiled when you saw me;
Was that because you thought you knew me?
I have wondered about you in your lonely tower,
Tell me of the things you see and do up there.
The ground is soft down here,
Come, join me,
And we will walk to the sea, you and I.

— Ronnie Ingraham

Soft palm tells no tales
Stars whisper no secrets
Three sisters spin no understanding
Our Father lends no hand.
I only ask myself.

— Lynn Comely





Solitaire

Alone; He stands on a hill.
Mouth moving, face distorted,
Gargles of sound emerge from
the vacuum of his mind.
Arms flailing,
Flag waving,
Feet stamping;
He shouts his message to
the world—
“May all be damned!”
And then sits; Alone.

— Marcie Rickenbacker

Paradox of Relativity

A smile is a movement of loneliness
A wail is a vibration of joy
A tear is the sustenance of tranquility
A kiss is the chill of desertion
A breath is the rankness of love.
I love to hate, and hate to see
Yet in my observation, I smile
and bless my fellow man.

— Debbie Prudden



footsteps can only produce paranoia
when one creates them in psychosomatic emotion
you may not see this, my loving friend,
for your mind lies in a blue sea of viking ships
that tantalize the golden waves.
i lie in a turmoil obstructed from the gongs of peace.

stones in the barricade of bitter winter
exchange futile ideas in words that will never fertilize
the winds caress the bandaged sky like the lovers
who drown in one another's arms
fathoms away from our hearts.

limbs of human trees, for the first time, sense the color of leaves
as they decompose into mud that represents conception,
later to be cold brown earth
so contrary to their misinterpreted existence

my body is motivated by their presence; left dead in their absence.
like the insect. I am incapable of allowing myself to merely be.
i am subject to the wind carrying light
blowing my eyes away from death and into the womb
i become an embryo once again, reeling in confusion with no direct-
ing sign
besides those formulating within me.

my body cringes as i inhale to howl and exhale but a whisper
i have no voice but that of the natural concepts
and i have no territory excepting the drum in my heart.
the exit lies within the epitaph and ascension is willingly prepared.
departure is apparent and i bid thee farewell, restless images.

— Kimberly Streeter

“Creation is a drug I can’t
do without.”

— Cecil B. DeMille

The mass of shouting, screaming bodies
Clamored, pushed, extended a branch of its being. . .
to eternity.

She was swept aside by the innundation
of legs and grabbing arms.

Knocked down by limb upon limb.
The mass surged onwards.

The rabble and clatter moved toward
the distant nearness.

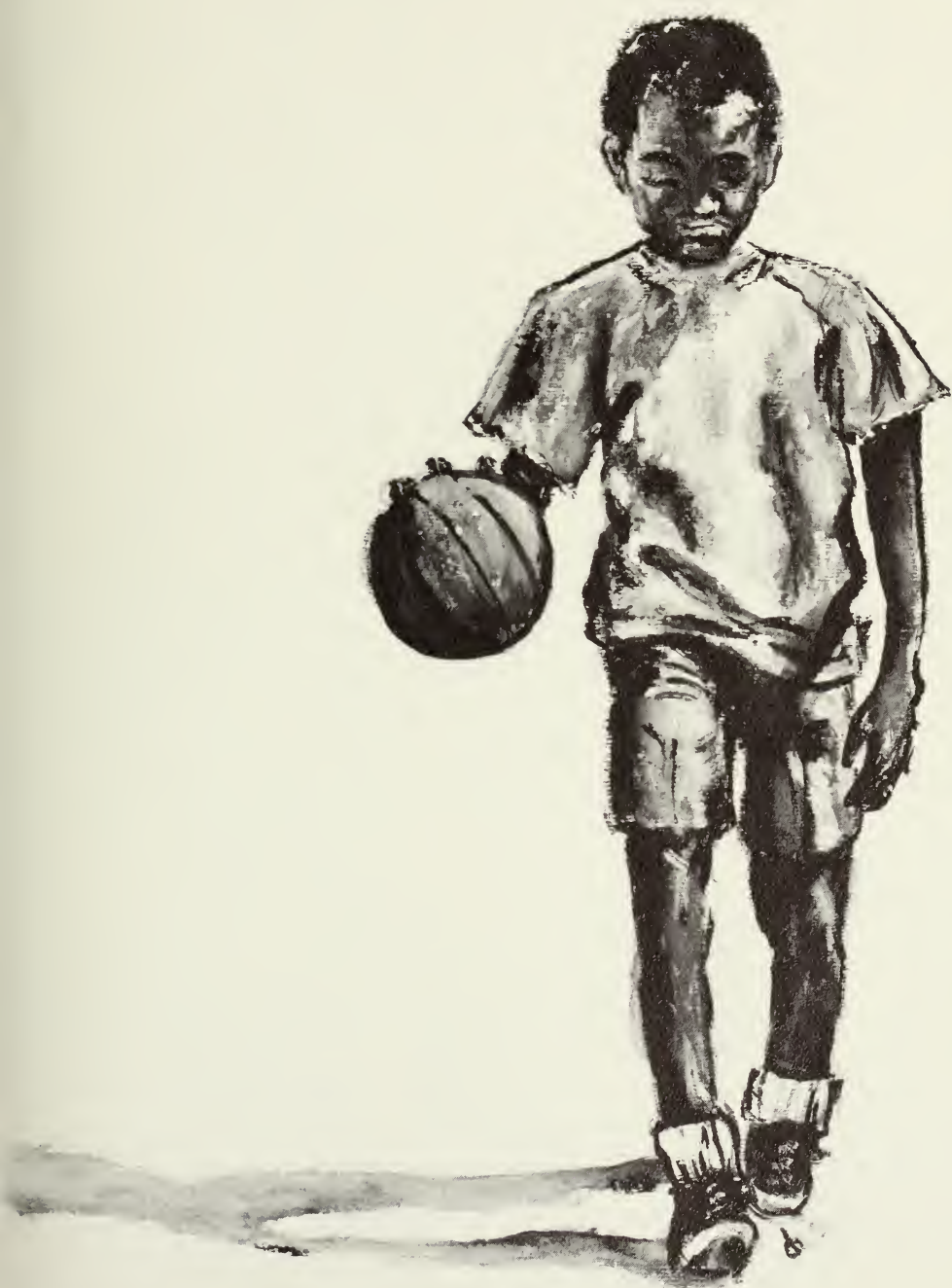
Shouts heard in the distance.

A mangled heap lay splashed. . .
in the bowels of the road.

— Marcie Rickenbacker







She
with sunken cheeks and
split lips
clad
in old lace rags
wavered
with the exit sign
above her head.

I
dusty, bedraggled, but
holding a basket of
blueberries
slipped out
and
fell
into a wishing well.

— Margaret Cheney



Sin

I wandered through the cold dark crevices of
the vast deep narrows of the damp dark creases,
And I came upon a cool mean fellow with
a coal red cap and a deep black furrow in his brow.
Satan, said I, I love you.

— Lynn Comley

Once I watched the lonely sun,
Saw its bright rays elude me.
I sat solemnly in the shade of youth,
Wondered when the painted sky would welcome me.
I let my feet scorn the soft sands,
And hid from the silken ocean spray.
Locked myself away from the touch of others,
closed my eyes to the beckoning gleam of understanding.
But someone entered that shade,
Someone who was looking, searching, for me.
Those tears dried as a smile cracked my walls,
And he let the sunshine in.

— Ronnie Ingraham

A Memory

She walked, oppressed by the bulk of her books, and the strain they put on her arms. Myriad faces blurred by her, each with the same expression. It was not one of sadness, nor one of anger. At the same time, however, it contained no happiness. Perhaps it would be best described as blankness. They streamed by her, not touching her, but at the same time engulfing her in their indifference. Struggling through the onslaught, she arrived at her classroom and assumed her note-taking position.

Arising humbly at the teacher's arrival, she acknowledged——'s smile and nodded in dazed recognition. It would be nice to know her, she mused as she aimlessly scribbled on her clean sheet of paper. So tired of this blank existence. Meetings, papers, aloneness, classes, appointments, pressure, hunger. No chestnuts to gather, no laughter, no escape route back to summer.

Bearing down gently she drew a crystalline soap bubble on her paper. Shading it carefully, illuminating its rainbow-like hues, she dexteriously designed a small door in the sphere, and glancing around quickly to detect observers, she stepped into her bubble.

It rose slowly on the current of the air and fled through the half-opened window of the classroom. Nose pressed eagerly against the cellophane-like wall, she gazed out at the leaves as she ascended above the trees. Suddenly the breeze caught the bubble, and it carried back to the sea.

Her carriage floated over the diamond speckled ocean, and drifted into the sheltered waters of the harbor. A forest of familiar masts greeted her, and the bubble, sensing the contained happiness of its passenger, pirouetted first on the top of one mast, and slid down the stays of the next.

Noticing the lighthouse (a very dear friend) standing majestically as always and girded by its iron coated skeleton, she urged her bubble away from its present frolicking, and up to the highest railing of the light. Once there she was able to gaze contentedly into its carefully dimmed, but still green eyes, and accept its welcoming wink.

It has been a long time gone, she sighed, recalling lost sun days, warm smiles, and cold but carressing waves.

And now, being where she was, she again was happy in the knowledge that her light still stood tall, and boats still rocked, and gulls still cried. She had succeeded in forgetting her necessary existence of mundane toil and had returned for a stolen moment into the past. If she had thought about it, she would have realized that she had no right to be there. The past is only something to form the cushioning under her developing mind. She had no right, but it gave her pleasure. Is that not enough?

The light blinked again, this time not in welcome, but in disapproval and perhaps goodbye. The girl struggled, tempted to drift in her transparent ship away to another enjoyable memory, but the pull on her conscience was too strong. Striking the specks of happiness out of her eyes, and wiping the smile off her face, she first gently reached out and touched the light, and then, with some hesitation, turned her pencil upside down and erased her bubble.

Picking up her books, she followed the innundation of heavy feet and blank faces out the door. and ran to meet her next class.

— Leslie Breed

Creative instruments of
five branches per each
block the ears
while in contemplation
attempts are made to
overcome the childhood fears
of reincarnation
the lady climbs the
leaves chatting over tea
with the acorns and insects,
wagging her tail,
voluntarily blinded by
the wind, extending sun in
soft, piercing blows
directly into her eye.
Excuse me it howls
and elopes with
the cotton candy.
Universal pomegranites sum up the difficulties in
his head, state observations
And she departed on stilts
with lovely shades of orange
varicose veins.

— Kimberly Streeter

another mind flies
crapping on the world
intense as the fire within its boundaries
drowning in a sea of colors

— Janet Cohen

The Struggle of the Mind

somebody is everybody
they all have sailing spirits
and fleeting minds.
the thoughts remain, but the mind has left.
only the body is constant.
it moves in sameness and repeats in motion.
the mind is unstable in its pursuits of
 meaning
it attempts, leaves residue, and follows its
destiny.
when the mind reaches out, it clings to little;
but its clinging catches the fabric of the
 covering—
the covering which encompasses and hides,
but never in entirety.
the tear remaining in its openness has given
a call to others—
a call to widen and lengthen,
plunge and pull,
yet only explore, not ravage.
and others to heed,
but in the end,
the cloth will stretch no further,
for it was built on the strength of a void.

— Jane Jouett

“And he danced by the light of
the moon, the moon . . .”

There was a time my eyes beheld a dream:
though clad in rags and shod with mud's dried crust,
he danced alone as though he were a team;
his ankle bells made music in the dust.

The years the lad had lived were yet but few,
his eyes shone bright beneath his palmleaf hat. . .
“Baksheesh,” cried he, so to him alms I threw.
What powers had he to mesmerize like that?

Though winter winds assail this other shore
and shivering trees, now bare, their leaves have shed,
my thoughts return to that dark youth that bore
just dance and song with which to earn his bread.

They say 'twas but a pauper (ancient theme)
I claim 'twas not a beggar but a dream.

— Margaret Cheney



Treehouse

SCENE: A very old treehouse made out of very dark wood. It is suspended between two large oak trees. There is no other foliage near these two trees except for long grass that stretches as far as one can see. Two people are seated in this treehouse; One, a girl, Fila, aged about fourteen, and the other a boy, Heath, aged about nineteen. They are sitting in opposite corners as the curtain rises.

FILA: You know, you really are an intolerable person; you are rude. You have interrupted me ten times within the last thirty minutes; I have kept count.

HEATH: You don't have a watch.

FILA: I know the time. (Pauses, thinking.) I watch the sun.

HEATH: What sun?

FILA: There is a sun (Pause.), there has to be a sun. It's there every day. (Agitated.) There has to be one today.

HEATH: There isn't one today, there wasn't one yesterday, there never was one.

FILA: Then why can we see? Why is there light?

HEATH: Artificial.

FILA: (Puzzled.) Artificial? No, that can't be. You really are intolerable. Artificial light! Well then, what's the source?

HEATH: The head.

FILA: There's no light in my head.

HEATH: That's right. There's no light at all in your head or you would be able to see more clearly. You see nothing. You just exist to talk about things you know nothing about. You know nothing about these things for you see nothing. You perceive nothing.

FILA: (Impatient.) Listen, let's leave this place.

HEATH: We'd break our legs.

(Silence.)

FILA: You know, I'd really rather like to ask you why it is that we'd break our legs, but you would think I was unintelligent.

HEATH: Just stay here.

FILA: Why would we break our legs?

HEATH: Must you always talk?

(Silence.)

FILA: (Like a child, pouting.) Don't you like me?

HEATH: (Disgusted.) Yes, I told you I liked you. For ten years I've seen nothing but you in this damned treehouse.

FILA: Let's leave it then.

HEATH: The ladder broke; there's no way out.

FILA: We could jump.

HEATH: We'd break our legs.

FILA: (Suddenly worried.) Really, Heath, really, we have to get down, we have to eat; what'll we do?

HEATH: Don't you understand? I tell you the same thing every day. We've been in this dirty treehouse for ten years now and we haven't eaten. We're still alive.

FILA: You are crazy! We just got here two hours ago.

HEATH: You don't have a watch.

FILA: (Looks at her wrist.) You are right again. I have asked Jimmy to buy me one for years now and he never does.

HEATH: (Without interest.) Who's Jimmy?

FILA: You know. I know you know.

HEATH: (Agitated.) Who the hell is Jimmy?

FILA: A boy I know, with freckles. He buys me things.

HEATH: Like watches?

FILA: No . . . he never bought me a watch . . . I don't . . . think.

HEATH: That's obvious.

(Long silence.)

FILA: I told you about Jimmy when we got up here, just a little while ago. Oh. (She smiles.) . . . I'd just seen him and he'd been wearing his white shirt. . . .with his white pants. He'd just. . . he'd just. . .oh! He'd just had his sneakers washed so they were all white also. He looked, oh, he looked so nice. Wait a minute. . . now I remember! He had just given me a watch then. Don't you remember it, Heath? (Heath says nothing.) Whatever happened to it, Heath? (she regards Heath suspiciously.) Did you take it? (Walks over to where Heath is sitting and turns his head so he is looking at her.) Did you, Heath?

HEATH: (Lifts Fila's hand away and looks down at the ground.)
Take what?

FILA: You did. You did. You took the watch Jimmy gave me, the silver one!

HEATH: (Still looking at the ground.) It was ten years ago, how should I remember?

FILA: Ten years ago! How can you say that, it was a little while ago (She hesitates.) because I remember it so. . .clearly.

HEATH: I wish you'd stop biting your nails, it makes a horrible racket.

FILA: You hate me. I know you hate me. Let me out!

HEATH: You'd break your leg. As a matter of fact you'd break your arm.

FILA: My arm. (Looks at her arm.) Oh yes.

HEATH: Did you ever think of that? (Smiles.) Yes it would hurt very much, wouldn't it? Breaking your arm, I mean.

FILA: Yes it would, why?

HEATH: Maybe I shall jump. (Smiles to himself.)

FILA: Please don't. Please don't leave me here.



HEATH: You jump too. (Gets up, walks towards the edge of the treehouse.) No. Too high. Yes. . .too high. (Walks to center of treehouse and sits down again. Fila gets up and walks over to Heath and puts her head in his lap.) Your hair smells.

FILA: (Gets up.) I hate you.

HEATH: I hate you. You (looks off into the distance.) are ugly.

FILA: Jimmy was so nice. Did I tell you he had red hair?

HEATH: (Bored.) No.

FILA: (She gets up and walks towards the edge of the treehouse.)
I can't see the horizon.

HEATH: (Bored.) It's white.

FILA: No. (She strains to see.) No it isn't. It's nothing. It's just not there. (She turns towards Heath.) Why? Why, please tell me, why isn't there a horizon today?

HEATH: Because it's not there. Can't you see? The grass just goes on and on; like (He pauses, thinking.) . . .people.

FILA: Oh. (She sits on the edge of the treehouse.) Tell me something else. Why is all the grass so black?

HEATH: (Very slowly and distinctly.) Because the people have all died, because they tried to get up here and they couldn't. All those people (He pauses.) . . .they all tried to get up here. That's why the ladder broke. (He starts crying.) They'll never get up here, Fila, they'll never get up here.

FILA: Hey. . .don't.

HEATH: I need you. (He goes over to Fila and grabs her arm.)
I do. I'm going to jump. I'll break my leg and not be able to get up again; then you'll be alone.

FILA: (Frightened.) No. You wouldn't leave me.

HEATH: (Calms down.) No. . .not after ten years. (Wipes his eyes with his arm.) I can't leave you after ten years, it's too long. . .too much time.

FILA: I don't understand (Starts biting her nails...)ten years.
No, it's not been that long.

HEATH: (Gets up and walks to other side of the treehouse.) You bore me. Why did I come up here? What are you doing?

FILA: (She is lying on her stomach now, with her head hanging over the edge of the treehouse.) Listen...yes...I think we can do it.

HEATH: Do what, damn it!

FILA: See...if you hold my legs, I may be able to reach the ladder.
See...you can suspend me in the air and maybe I can do it.
(Jumps up, pleased.) We can do it, Heath!

HEATH: You mean you want to? Don't you know there's nothing down there? Nothing at all...just...grass.

FILA: (Ecstatic.) We can go home and eat dinner!

HEATH: (Mumbling.) There's nothing left there. It's all gone.
It's all gone...

FILA: And I can see Jimmy and he'll buy me things, anything I want and...and, Heath, you can come too.

HEATH: Don't you see...there's nothing.

FILA: Please do this for me...I just want to get down.

HEATH: Listen, face it...Please sit down. (Fila does so.)

FILA: (Looking up at the branches of the trees.) These trees don't have any leaves.

HEATH: They're dead.

FILA: Oh.

(Silence.)

FILA: Did you ever wonder about things?

HEATH: (Annoyed.) What does that mean?

FILA: Like why there isn't a sun ever and there's no horizon and the grass is all black and why we're not hungry and, Heath, it's dinnertime.

HEATH: Yes I have.

FILA: Have what?

HEATH: Wondered.

FILA: Tell me about it.

HEATH: It made me very sad...and very old. Don't think, Fila.

FILA: I can't stop. (Frustrated.) No one can! You can't just ask someone not to think. Everyone thinks all the time.

HEATH: You think idiot thoughts.

FILA: No. No, I don't.

(A silence.)

FILA: Maybe I do.

HEATH: There's no other way to describe them...You know, I have known you for all this time, yet I still don't know you.

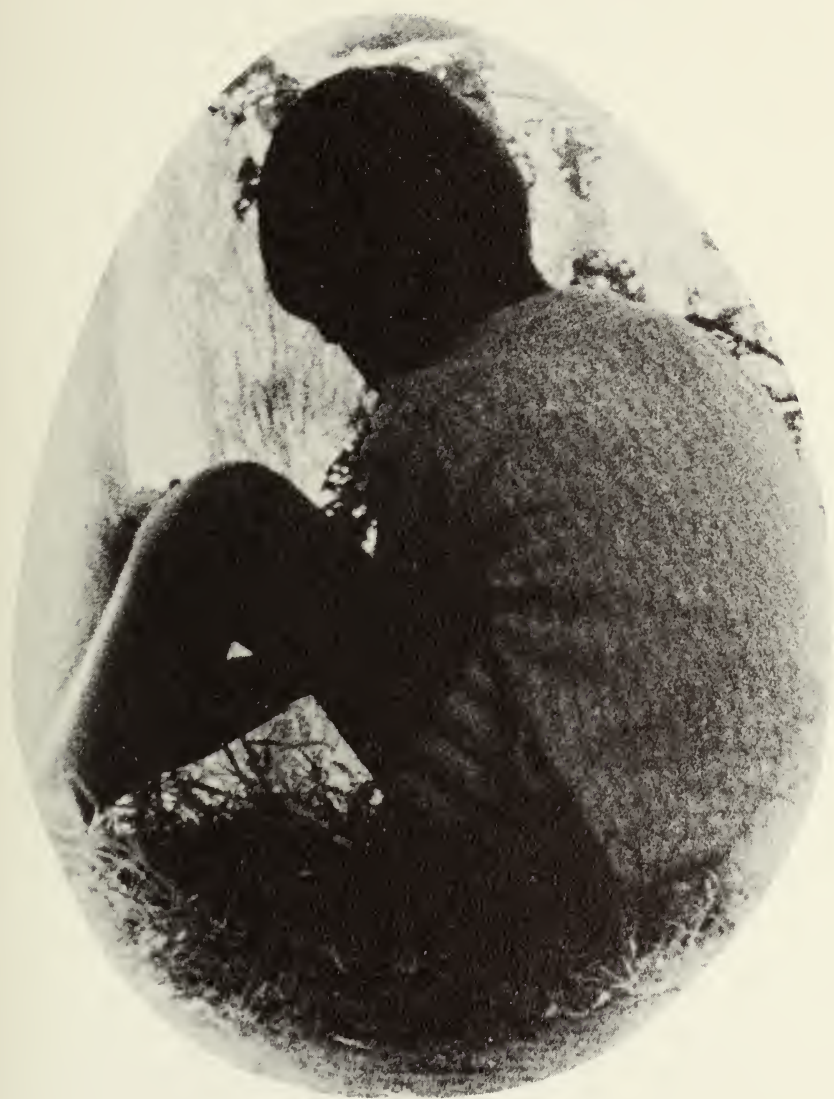
FILA: (Walks over to Heath and sits down next to him. Speaks slowly.) But you can't leave and I can't leave. We'll just have to stay...we'll have to stay for a very long time. (She looks up at Heath.) Maybe we'll have to stay for another ten years. (Heath nods.)

Curtain.

— Beth Andrews

Fuscia orange
Seeps into a billion
Grains of sand.
Tinting, cementing, distorting,
It rises, swells
And moves as one
To overtake the
Forest green
With its little
Beasties
And their gingerbread homes.

— Leslie Breed



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